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GENDER DYNAMICS IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE, SEFI ATTA AND CHIKA UNIGWE

A SYNOPSIS

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PhD

Synopsis

1.1. Title of the research Proposal:

GENDER DYNAMICS IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE, SEFI ATTA AND CHIKA UNIGWE

Introduction:

Gender is a social and cultural construct which is used to look at roles and behavior of men and women. The gender issues are centered on experiences of men and women as member of the society. A general assumption is that gender issues are the issues affecting women, who mainly focus on the relationship between men and women to the social, political and economic structure of the society. Gender has wide set of characteristics that form a basis of distinction between male and female entities, extending from one's biological sex to other in humans, one's social role or gender identity. Gender plays vital role in determining and analyzing the relationships between men and women with respect to their roles, privileges, status and positions.

Therefore, gender issues are means in understanding and learning more about the behavior of men and women in society and the tribulations and opportunities that each face in doing those activities. In male dominated society gender plays crucial role in oppressing, exploiting and subjugating female, and in giving them inferior treatment.

From centuries, we are entangled with such issues that deny equal rights to women and continue to treat them inhumanly. The struggle

for the emancipation is age old which resulted in rise of Feminism that in time spread throughout the world with different labels having different approaches. In Africa also it flourished under different labels. Some writers practice sober ways where as some are extremists. Thus it gave birth to different notions like Humanism, Womanism, Stiwanism ,Motherism and Radicalism etc. These changes evolving in gender and power structures received strong manifestation in literature throughout the world and contemporary Nigerian literature strongly records the gender dynamics that challenge the existing norms in patriarchal society.

In this regard, the proposed research embarks on gender and feministic issues exposed by third generation Nigerian women novelists and the way they used their skills to expose the facts of real world in their fiction and how they voiced their resistance against the inhuman treatment to women in patriarchal Nigerian society. The present study deals with the selected works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie ,Sefi Atta and Chika Unigwe, three leading novelists in contemporary Nigerian literature who depict array of grim incidents exposing the severity of the feministic issues in Nigerian society.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is an acclaimed Nigerian woman writer and socialist who won several awards and persistently deals with social, political and cultural aspects in Nigeria that reveals reality of contemporary Nigeria. In her writing she exposes current problems of Nigeria especially feministic issues like gender discrimination, class oppression, racism and identity Crisis. Her realistic and novel style attracted readers of young generation to the African Literature.

Her debut novel, ***Purple Hibiscus*** **(**2003), which deals with gender oppression, domestic violence and identity crisis, is highly appreciated by the critics. It was shortlisted for the **Orange prize for fiction (2004)** and was awarded the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book (2005).

Her second novel, ***Half of a Yellow Sun*** (2006), named after the flag of the short lived nation of Biafra, is set before and during the Nigerian Civil War. It received the 2007 **Orange Prize for Fiction and the Anisfield –Wolf Book Award.**

Americanah (2013), the third novel of Adichie accounts the story of a young Nigerian encountering race in America, was selected by ***The New York Times*** as one of "The 10 Best Books of 2013".

Sefi Atta

Sefi Atta is one of the eminent Nigerian novelists in the contemporary literary world who won several literary awards. Moreover, she penned many plays. She mainly foregrounds the themes of oppression, corruption, and hypocrisy in society to expose socio-cultural issues in contemporary Nigeria .She presents the tussle between tradition and modernity that challenges to patriarchal customs and the simultaneous movement by women to liberate themselves from societal imperatives are potent themes in Atta's works.
Her first novel ***Everything Good Will Come*** (2005) **won Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa in 2006.** Her second novel is ***Swallow*** (2008) and the third is ***A Bit of Difference*** (2012) .

Chika Unigwe :

Chika Unigwe , was born in 1974 in Enugu, Nigeria who has a Ph.D in Literature from the University of Leiden in the Netherland. She is a versatile writer who wrote novels, short stories and two children's books . ***De Feniks***, was her first novel published in 2005, which was shortlisted for the *Vrouw en Kultuur debuutprijs* for the best first novel by a female writer. She won the 2003 BBC Short Story Competition and a Commonwealth Short Story Competition award . In 2004, she was shortlisted for the Caine Prize for African Writing**.** In the same year, her short story made the top 10 of the Million Writers Award for best online fiction. In 2005, she won third prize in the Equiano Fiction Contest.

Her second novel, ***On Black Sisters' Street*** was published in 2009, which was originally written in Dutch titled as *Fata Morgana* and published in 2008 won Nigeria Prize for Literature in 2012. This novel explores life of African prostitutes in Belgium.

Unigwe's third novel ***Night Dancer*** published in 2012. It was shortlisted for the NLNG Nigeria Prize for Literature in September 2016. ***Night Dancer*** reveals story of gender discrimination, changing scenario of familial relations and records gender dynamics in contemporary Nigerian society. It highlights the issue of women's struggle for an identity.

Unigwe published her fourth novel *Black Messiah* in 2014.

List of the novels selected for the research:

Sr.No.	Novel	Name of the writer
1	***Purple Hibiscus***	Chimamanda Adichie
2	***Half of A Yellow Sun***	Chimamanda Adichie
3	***Everything good will come***	Sefi Atta
4	***Swallow***	Sefi Atta
5	***Night Dancer***	Chika Unigwe
6	***On Black Sisters' Street***	Chika Unigwe

1.2 Significance of Study

The present research work in prevailing crucial social issues like Gender, Identity, Race and other feministic concerns in the selected third generation writers will be of great importance to explore the contemporary social life, mainly of women in Nigeria. Though premise selected for the study deals with the most challenging universal problem of the day its severity can be mostly traced in severely exploited part of the world that is Africa. As a result, many of African women writers broke the shackles of custom and started to resist through their writings. To overthrow the burden of tyrannical traditions and to assert equality in society, the women writers raised their voice by using the means of writing. Thus, transition from collectivism of previous forms of African feminism can be traced in the writings of the third generation novelists Chimamanda Adichie, Sefi Atta, and Chika Unigwe, who are acclaimed leading contemporary Nigerian women novelists and won various prestigious awards.

They have significant contribution to contemporary feministic literature and they raised some significant questions which open up new avenues to explore.

Their works have been read widely all over the world and students have reviewed their novels from different perspectives. Somehow, the writers have not received the due critical attention that they deserve by the Indian scholars. Therefore, the present research will take the contemporary Black Feministic studies one step ahead. It is an attempt to create gender sensitization that eventually change the attitude of the people who consider women inferior to them .Moreover, it appeals to eliminate social inequalities and inhuman acts against the women. This research will expand the frontiers of knowledge and will be helpful for the research students who are interested in issues of gender equality and human rights for all.

1.3 Statement of the Problem –

Gender discrimination, race, class, and slavery are products of selfishness, greed and, desire for power and supremacy which is human nature. Especially, women are treated like objects and have been given inferior treatment and they deprived of their rights in nearly every society throughout the world. Gender is used as a weapon to exercise dominance over women. This age old menace which left drastic effect on the life of women is a product of abuse of the power by using mechanism of religion as well as tradition. Because of this oppressive system, women lagged behind nearly in every sphere of the life. The present study will investigate how the select novels of Nigerian writers present issues of Gender, Power, Identity, Class and Race to unveil the reality of contemporary Nigerian women's life and how the women characters register their resistance to domination.

1.4 Review of literature:

From ancient time, the women have not given the equitable status in society because of the stereotypical customs, traditions present in patriarchal male dominated society. This is universal reality that women are just an object of constant disdain, humiliation and physical torture. Even today, when the world entered into new millennium brutal atrocities and violence against women prevail nearly in all over the world just ratio varies. Therefore, women's consciousness of their position in the society and the protest against the oppression gave rise to feministic movement in America in twentieth century which gradually spread in different parts of the world.

African feminism and Black feminism engendered because their problems as well as experience were different from white women who think themselves feminists. As the present study deals with two Nigerian writers our focus will be on Black Feminism, African Feminism and Nigerian Feminism. Lot of research work has been completed on the female authors and femistic themes handeled by them , in last few years throughout the world as well in India also .Thus ,Feminism is one of the most celebrated issues in research that traced changing approaches from the birth of the feminism.

But Black Feminism differs from the white feminism because it is based on concept of intersectionality .It means Sexism, class oppression, gender identity and racism are inextricably bound together. Whereas, white feminists is used to criticize those who do not acknowledges issues of intersectionality. Furthur, Alice Walker created a term Womanist to give Black women distinction from inapplicable White Feminist issues .Thus, the Black Feminist theory includes an

analysis of the way race ,class, sexuality as well as gender influence the black women's life.

The books, research works and articles related to this are as follows:

In a book, writing *Contemporary Nigeria: How Sefi Atta Illuminates African Culture and Tradition* , Walter Collins explains that Sefi Atta is one of the latest in a great line of female Nigerian writers. She continues to carry the torch borne by women writers like Flora Nwapa, Ifeoma Okoye, and Buchi Emecheta who preceded her. Her work has been published widely on the African continent, in the United Kingdom and in the United States. Her writing focuses on the situations in which Nigerians have found themselves and continue to find themselves and is at once harmoniously poetic and bitingly frank.Atta is an engaged writer who tackles issues of Nigerian culture and tradition head on. Never shying away, she demonstrates no shame in forefronting some of the more difficult and shameful aspects of Nigerian cultural practice. Yet, simultaneously, she proves continuously that there are transcendent aspects of Nigerian society as she celebrates them through descriptive and poetic writing. Literary scholars and students alike will benefit from this collection of essays on her multifaceted works.

In a article, *Traumatic Experiences of Nigerian Women: An Archetypal Representation in Adichie's Purple Hibiscus,* Sadiya Abubakar explains that Women in a patriarchal society like Nigeria, are treated with gender subordination which subjects them to experiencing indelible traumas. Trauma, however is today regarded as one of the leading causes of death. As such, its theorist put to light its various sources as: intimate partner violence, natural disasters, loss of loved one, sexual assault or any physical or mental wound,

rape, and witness of violence. Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus is an epitome of Nigerian women's difficulties and their traumatic experiences.

In a Ph.D. thesis *Fictional World of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: A Thematic Study of Selected Works* a thesis submitted to MOHANLAL SUKHADIA UNIVERSITY in the Faculty of Humanities, in 2016, the research student, Kirti Jha in concludes that Adichie, an unabashed voice of twenty first century Nigerian woman has not only established herself as an Igbo-centric woman author of Nigeria but has also won accolades as a Diaspora writer. Her fictional narratives- *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half Of A Yellow* Sun, *The Thing Around Your Neck* and *Americanah* have not only made the topography and culture of Nigeria popular on the international stage but have also deals with critical questions on **race, colour and ethnicity.**

Furthur, she adds that, Adichie is not only a champion of the national cause of Nigeria but as a writer she is also aware of the gender bias prevailing in African societies. The way in which Adichie makes her women characters brave the harrowing experiences of patriarchy also entitles her to be called a feminist.

In *a* Ph.D. thesis *AN ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED WORKS OF TONI MORRISON: A BLACK FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE*, submitted to Savitribai Phule University, Pune, by Ali Erfanian Marjani ,the researcher examine Morrison's novels from the radical feminist viewpoint, and the Black American Aesthetical frame. Morrison has given authenticity and voice to the interior life of the most complex black and female experience in white America. Race

discrimination based on skin colour is not a new problem. The researcher shows though number of novelists, both black and white, have expressed this problem through their writings, Toni Morrison,who is one of the Afro-American novelists has shown a deep insight into the racial problems.

Biscaldi, Laura in an M.A. thesis submitted to university Ca'Foscari, Venice ,Italy *"Fierce consumers of life": Feminism in the Works of Chimamanda Adichie* considers the figure of Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie as representative for a new wave of feminism. Moreover, this text also examines the postcolonial element to Adichie's writing and how it relates to her feminist stance. Four of Adichie's texts are presented for analysis in a postcolonial and intersectional light: *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of A Yellow Sun, The Thing Around Your Neck,* and *Americanah.*

In *a* Ph.D. thesis *BLACK FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE WORKS OF TONI CADE BAMBARA* a thesis submitted to SHIVAJI UNIVERSITY, KOLHAPUR , the Reasearcher Khan, Zaharabi Zuberahmad explores through the stories and novels , the gradual development of Black Feminist Consciousness in Bambara and how she directly involved in the cultural and sociopolitical activities in urban communities across the country and how through her novels Bambara tries to instil Black Feminist Consciousness in black masses.

In this context Chimamanda Adichie ,Sefi Atta and Chika Unigwe tends to deviate and they try to break the traditions. They did not appreciated the African traditions but exposed hypocrisy ,corruption and brutality against women .The thematic study exploring Chimamanda Adichie's fiction is

completed by a scholar from Rajasthan University but it hasn't studied deeply the feministic issues. So the current comparative and comprehensive research will explore how these young writers configure the feministic issues in contemporary Nigeria to depict the social realism and gender discrimination. .

1.5 Objectives of Research:

- To study gender discrimination.
- To explore identity crisis in patriarchal society.
- To represent domestic violence and class oppression.
- To outline marginalization and slavery.
- To study conflict between tradition and modernity.
- To reconfigure gender power dynamics.

1.6 Hypothesis -

The select novels of the third generation Nigerian novelists Chimamanda Adichie, Sefi Atta and Chika Unigwe considered for the proposed research are marked by the issues of gender, class and identity and the writers self consciously reconfigure contemporary feministic issues to reflect themes of social and gender discrimination and illustrate trend of transition.

1.7 Methodology of Research:

The present research proposes to undertake thematic, comparative, interpretative and analytical method to study the novels of Chimamanda Adichie, Sefi Atta and Chika Unigwe.

1.8 Chapter Scheme:

The study will tentatively comprise of six chapters.

Chapter 1. Introduction

(life and works ,features of their writings , review of literature , purpose of study ,Scope and Limitation ,Research Problems, and research Methodology)

Chapter 2. **Theoretical frame work** of feminism and Gender theory (i.e. Gender inequality, Gender oppression and Gender Discrimination etc.)

Chapter 3. **Gender discrimination** and **IdentityCrisis** in the selected novels.

Chapter 4. Marginalization and slavery in the selected novels.

Chapter 5. **Gender power dynamics** in the selected novels.

Chapter 6. **Conclusion** on the ground of study conducted in previous chapters

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